

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FACULTY OF MUSIC

# University Symphony Chorus Concert Choir Chamber Orchestra

Doreen Rao, conductor

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Friday, November 9, 1990 at 8 pm

MacMillan Theatre

Toronto

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Saturday, November 10, 1990 at 8 pm

The Cathedral Church of St. George

Kingston

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## Mass for Prisoners of Conscience

John Burge

Doreen Rao, conductor  
Margaret Terry, mezzo-soprano  
Russell Braun, baritone  
Arlene Penaranda, treble  
University Symphony Chorus  
Concert Choir  
Chamber Orchestra

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### *Kyrie eleison*

[Lord have mercy]

Baritone: I was picked up even before I reached the meeting place and taken off in an unmarked car by four armed policemen. When the car stopped in the courtyard of the headquarters, they immediately began to punch and kick me in the presence of some people seated on benches in front of the main building. I was beaten as I went up the steps to a room on the top floor where they continued to slap me, hit me about the head and bang my ears with cupped hands. They took off the handcuffs and continued to hit me with their truncheons whilst questioning me.

They ordered me to strip completely; I obeyed. They made me sit down on the floor and tied my hands with a thick rope. One of the six or seven policemen present put his foot on the rope in order to tighten it. I lost all feeling in my hands. They put my knees up to my elbows so that my bound hands were on a level with my ankles. Placing an iron bar between my knees and elbows they suspended me about three feet from the floor.

After punching and clubbing me, they placed a wire on the little toe of my left foot and placed the other end between my legs. The wires were attached to a camp telephone so that the current increased or decreased according to the speed at which the handle was turned. They began to give me electric shocks using this equipment and continued to beat me brutally. The shocks and beatings continued for several hours. As it was beginning to get dark I practically lost consciousness. Each time that I fainted, they threw water over me to increase my sensitivity to the electric shocks. One of the policemen remarked, "Look, he's letting off sparks. Let's put it in his ear now!".



*Christe eleison*

[Christ have mercy]

Mezzo: I cannot find my husband. I know that he was taken by the authorities, but they deny it. I have witnesses that saw him taken, but they deny it still. The local police will not investigate. Our lawyer says that even if we could find where they are holding him, they would probably move him farther away, if they haven't already done so.

I have no one to turn to. My friends avoid me. They do not wish to appear connected to me. It is as if I have a contagious disease and they don't want to get contaminated by me. Our neighbours fear for their families. I cannot blame them. The fear I have for my children is almost as intense as the fear that I have for their father.

*Kyrie eleison*

[Lord have mercy]

Baritone: A thick wall of silence, a silence of terror and of the grave surrounds this place, this prison, this hell-hole. Sometimes they blindfold you for days on end. Some people are even left blindfolded for weeks or months. They keep you like this to add to the fear-then suddenly they whip off the folds to interrogate you. You are almost blind, the light is painful and you can't concentrate on a single thought. One man has spent twenty-seven months like this. Now he sits largely in total silence wagging his head from one side to the other. Sometimes he just sits knocking his head on the wall.

This waiting is interrupted by the interrogations. With torture they can get you to say anything they want. After the last session I was seen by a doctor and given a document to sign which included statements made under duress and also stated that I had been treated well. When I refused to sign they threatened to start torturing my family. Under such circumstances one has to sign.

***Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, dominus Deus Sabaoth! Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis. Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.***

[Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty! Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. Glory to God in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Glory to God in the highest.]

Mezzo: They have finally admitted they are holding him. For weeks the authorities had assured the judge that "...the person in question was not in their custody." The liars! Of course they still have yet to charge him, but at least they are letting him write letters home. He says he is fine, but I know that is not the truth. There is no truth. Can there ever be any truth?

Soon we will run out of money. I cannot obtain a 'Declaration of Non-involvement' from the government. It is impossible to get a job without one. Soon I will not be able to feed and clothe our children. Right now I can barely afford to send them to school. Perhaps the only thing I know for certain, is that as miserable as my life is, my husband's can only be worse.

***Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.***

[O Lamb of God, thou takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.]

Baritone: I have experienced the fate of a victim. I have seen the torturer's face at close quarters. It was in a worse condition than my own bleeding, livid face. The torturer's face was distorted by a kind of twitching that had nothing human about it. He was in such a state of tension that he had an expression very similar to those we see on Chinese masks; I am not exaggerating. It is not an easy thing to torture people. For torturing requires inner participation. In this situation, I turned out to be the lucky one. For although I was humiliated, at least I did not humiliate others. I was simply bearing a profoundly unhappy humanity on my aching back. Whereas the men who humiliate you must first humiliate the notion of humanity within themselves.

Never mind if they strut around in their uniforms, swollen with the knowledge that they can control the suffering, the sleeplessness, the hunger and the despair of their fellow human beings, intoxicated with the power in their hands. Their intoxication is nothing other than the degradation of humanity-the ultimate degradation. They have had to pay dearly for my torments. I was not the one in the worse position. I was just a man who moaned because he was in great pain. I prefer that. At this moment I am deprived of the joy of seeing my children going to school or playing in the park. Whereas the men who are holding me here, every morning they must first look their own children in the face.

***Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.***

[O Lamb of God, thou takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.]

Child: Dear Mister President,

I want to ask you to let my daddy go free because he is good. I haven't seen him in such a long, long time! He always sends me little drawings and stories. I was always going to *La Plata* before with my granma, but I can't go there now because it is very far and I would have to take a plane. My mother also wants him to be free so we could all live together and he can buy me candy and toys. My friends are always asking me for my daddy. I tell them that when you, Mr. President, let my daddy go free he will take all of us to the park to play ball.



***Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, Dona nobis pacem.***

[O Lamb of God, thou takest away the sin of the world, grant us peace.]

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## About the Music

*Mass for Prisoners of Conscience* is a sixty-minute work scored for Baritone, Mezzo Soprano and Child soloists, Choir and Chamber Orchestra. The text material for the soloists consists entirely of first-hand accounts of political prisoners and their families sung in English. Although the original accounts are unrelated and drawn from events that occurred in different countries, in the work they are presented in a narrative fashion with the soloists personifying the roles of an immediate family's father, mother and child. These accounts or testimonials are drawn from material that was provided by Amnesty International, to whom the work is dedicated. For much of this century, the letter-writing campaigns organized by Amnesty International have significantly helped to bring the plight of political prisoners to the forefront of world attention. In many instances, the release of a political prisoner can be directly attributed to the efforts of AI. The forceful simplicity displayed in the letter that makes up the child's solo found at the end of this work—"Dear Mr. President, I want to ask you to let my daddy go free because he is good...."—strikingly captures the inherent power and directness of the written word when used with honesty and conviction.

Surrounding and alternating with the solo settings, the choir sings sections from the liturgical Mass in Latin. Like the chorus in a Greek tragedy, the choir in these movements can often be seen to comment on the emotions and situations that are expressed in the solo movements. For example, the tightly wound contrapuntal texture, marked rhythms and general relentlessness of the first *Kyrie*, musically foreshadows the capture and interrogation that is described in the text of the second movement's baritone solo. Similarly, by using only the women's voices of the choir in the introspective *Christe* setting, the listener is more gradually pulled into the stark despair that is conveyed in the first female solo.

The same kinds of inter-connections can be made between the other solo and choral movements, thereby making the entire work more continuous than the thirteen movement structure may at first indicate. This lack of division between movements is most apparent in the last movement where the final choral setting gradually enters underneath the child's on-going solo. While the child's letter is full of the optimism that is youth, in actuality the situation of the father's imprisonment still remains unresolved. The final choral setting attempts to musically project this sense of ambiguity by the constant shifts of mood and references back to material heard earlier. It is with a sense of resignation that the final bars of music returns to the dissonant sonority of the opening *Kyrie*.

Throughout the entire work, broad-scale structural links are developed and maintained through the use of only a few motivic elements. This self-imposed compositional limitation can be seen on a symbolic level to be analogous to the restricted emotional and physical confines described by the soloists. In some instances, the musical setting may be even more explicitly representative of the situation that is found in the text. For example, in the sixth movement, as the baritone describes in first-person a prisoner's confinement, the orchestra is reduced to just muted strings with slight touches of percussion and piano colouring. To further heighten this sense of abandonment the pitch material of the strings is entirely made up of the eleven possible transpositions of the baritone's melodic line. By canonically following the baritone's music so closely, the resultant string texture forms a dense, contrapuntal cage around the soloist.

In addition to the string section, the chamber orchestra consists of four solo winds, four French horns, piano and percussion. The use of single winds is closely coupled with the work's overall focus on the individual perspective as found in the soloists' texts. The four French horns not only add a darker colour to the instrumental sound, but, when the text requires it, their fanfare-like music helps to project a militaristic feeling. With a battery of twelve instruments, the percussionist also adds colour to the music, and, by projecting some of the important rhythmic activity, helps to better articulate the different sections of the Mass.

*Mass for Prisoners of Conscience* was commissioned in 1987 by Vancouver's Christ Church Cathedral Choir, through funding provided by The Canada Council. Mr. Rupert Lang, the director of the Christ Church Cathedral Choir has kindly granted permission for Dr. Doreen Rao to conduct the premiere performances of this work with the University of Toronto Symphony Chorus, Concert Choir and Chamber Orchestra. - JB

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This evening's performance will be repeated in Kingston on Saturday, November 10.  
The part of the child soloist will be performed by Adrian McFarlane.

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The Friday performance is being recorded by CJRT-FM for future broadcast.



## BIOGRAPHIES

In little more than a decade, **DOREEN RAO** has established herself as one of North America's most celebrated conductors and teachers. Prior to her appointment as Director of Choral Programs at the University of Toronto, Doreen Rao held the dual position of assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and music director and conductor of the Glen Ellyn Children's Chorus. During her long association with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Chorus under Sir Georg Solti and Margaret Hillis, Doreen Rao prepared choruses for recordings that won four Grammy Awards and a Grand Prix du Disque. In addition, she prepared choruses for Claudio Abbado, James Levine, Daniel Barenboim, Helmuth Rilling, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas and Edo de Waart.

Doreen Rao made her conducting debut at London's Royal Festival Hall in 1980, her New York conducting debut with the American Symphony Orchestra in 1985, and her Carnegie Hall debut with the Manhattan Philharmonic last May. Her many appearances as guest conductor and choral clinician in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Israel, and Africa have won her an avid and extensive following. Dr. Rao has also been a featured guest conductor for numerous university choral workshops, all-state choruses and international music festivals including the national conventions of the American Choral Directors' Association, the Music Educators' National Conference and the American Orff and Kodaly associations.

Dr. Rao is especially recognized for her commitment to performance-based music education and the future of choral music in the schools. She founded the ACDA National Committee on Children's Choirs in 1979 and served on the MENC National Committee on Standards in Music Education until 1985. She was honored by the YWCA as "Outstanding Leader in Arts and Culture" and by her colleagues of the American Choral Director's Association for "Her Commitment to Choral Excellence..." The Chicago Tribune described her as "a dedicated and innovative conductor...charged with enthusiasm." A CBS television documentary, Profiles of a Conductor, has called Rao's musical achievements "extraordinary".

Doreen Rao holds a Ph.D. from Northwestern University where she served as a research assistant and conductor of the Northwestern University Chorus. She is the author of *Choral Music Experience*, a comprehensive series of choral textbooks and music published by Boosey & Hawkes and co-author of the secondary choral textbook *SING!* published by Hinshaw Music.

Since the fall of 1987, **JOHN BURGE** (b. 1961) has been teaching in the School of Music at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario where he currently holds the position of Assistant Professor. He studied composition at the University of Toronto (B.Mus. and M.Mus.) with John Beckwith, Walter Buczynski, John Hawkins and Derek Holman, and at the University of British Columbia (D.M.A.) with Stephen Chatman. He has written music for a wide variety of mediums including many choral pieces. His choral works have been performed by the Elmer Iseler Singers, Vancouver's Cantata Singers, the Phoenix Chamber Choir, the BBC Singers and numerous other choirs. His instrumental music has been played by The Nepean Symphony and New Music Concerts (Toronto). He has received commissions from both the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council. Included amongst the prizes that he has received are a record five Young Composers Awards in three years (1985, '87, '88) from the Performing Rights Organization of Canada.

**MARGARET TERRY** gained her Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Toronto. She is continuing her studies with the University of Toronto Opera Division, where she recently performed the role of Lady Jane in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*. She has just finished participating in masterclasses with Nancy Evans and Heather Harper, and performing the role of Mistress Quickly in Verdi's *Falstaff* at the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies.

**RUSSELL BRAUN** is currently studying at the Opera Division, University of Toronto. He has frequently performed with Opera in Concert, Toronto Operetta Theatre, and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society. He has appeared in recital with the Composers Orchestra of Toronto, the Kelowna Philharmonic Society, and the Aldeburgh Connection. Russell Braun can be heard on the Juno award-winning children's recording *Beethoven Lives Upstairs* and the soon to be released *Mozart and His Magic Flute* as Papageno. He appeared recently as Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro* for a Casey House fund-raising concert in Toronto, and will appear this May as Ulysses in *The Return of Ulysses* with Opera Atelier.

**ARLENE PENARANDA**, thirteen years old, is a grade eight student at Dr. Marion Hilliard Senior Public School in Scarborough and a member of the Bach Children's Chorus of Scarborough, conducted by Linda Beaupré. Her first solo performance was at the age of five, when she sang at the Manilla Pavillion in Toronto's Caravan. Since then, she has sung many solos in church and school ensembles, and most recently sang the youth solo in the Amadeus Choir of Scarborough's April concert of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Arlene Penaranda has studied voice privately with Gordon Wright for three years. Her



musical studies also include piano and clarinet, which she has played for four years. In her "spare" time, she takes pride in singing with the Music Leadership Fellowship of Forward Baptist Church in Toronto.

**ADRIAN McFARLANE** is twelve years old and a grade seven student at the Claude Watson School for the Arts. He sings in the Claude Watson School for the Arts Choir, under the direction of Jan Szot, plays bass with the Claude Watson Chamber Strings, and is also a member of the Percussion Ensemble. Last December, Adrian sang the role of one of the three small boys in the University of Toronto performance of Benjamin Britten's *St. Nicolas* conducted by Doreen Rao. Adrian McFarlane studies piano privately with Cecilia Ignatieff and bass with Cynthia Woods. He maintains an avid interest in sketching, and plays tennis and baseball.

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### SPECIAL THANKS TO

Tracy Ryan, Julia Donovan, Sebastian Dreyfus and Gordon Rand  
from the University of Toronto Drama Program  
under the direction of Ken Gass  
in cooperation with Professor Pia Kleber  
coordinated by Nanette Masson

Paul Bentley  
President, Amnesty International Canadian Section, English Speaking

Bob Goodfellow  
Director of Coordinations, Campaigns & Membership, Amnesty International  
Department of Alumni and Community Relations  
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